

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 11588

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR VE

SUBJ: U.S.-VENEZUELAN TALKS: HESITANCY OF SCHACHT TO REPLY

REF: A. CARACAS 11472; B. STATE 254499

1. AS INDICATED REF A, SCHACHT TOLD ME NOVEMBER 19 THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS SUGGESTIONS SET OUT REF B WITH PRESIDENT AND CALL ME THE NEXT DAY. THIS HE HAS NOT DONE.

2. WE GATHER FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT SCHACHT INCURRED PRESIDENT PEREZ'S DEEPEST DISPLEASURE BECAUSE OF MIS-HANDLING OF THE QUITO CONFERENCE. ALTHOUGH I DO NOT CEASE TO HOLD THE OPINION THAT SCHACHT WOULD NOT HAVE DARED TO MAKE THE STATEMENTS HE DID WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION OF THE PRESIDENT, IT MAY HAVE SINCE PROVED TO BE THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ, IN VIEW OF THE GENERAL FEELING THAT VENEZUELA WAS "DEFEATED" AT THE QUITO CONFERENCE, MAY NOW BE IMPELLED TO MAKE HIS FOREIGN MINISTER THE SCAPEGOAT.

3. THAT SCHACHT IS FIGHTING BACK OR AT LEAST SETTING UP A COUNTERING SMOKESCREEN IS EVIDENCED BY THE EXTRAORDINARY STATEMENT HE REPORTEDLY MADE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF ACCION DEMOCRATICA, IN WHICH IT IS STATED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THIS MORNING'S NACIONAL, QUOTE IN THE JUDGMENT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER THERE IS OBSTRUCTION
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OF THE PART OF OFFICIALS OF THE CASA AMARILLA WHO DELAY

THE SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY BY NOT FOLLOWING THE RHYTHM WHICH NOT ONLY THE PRESIDENT BUT ALSO HE HIMSELF DESIRED TO IMPRINT ON THE MINISTRY. UNQUOTE. THE ACCOUNT IN EL NACIONAL GOES ON TO ADD: QUOTE THE ACCUSATION WAS CHARACTERIZED AS VERY SERIOUS BY MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF AD WHO LISTENED TO THE REPORT OF FOREIGN MINISTER SCHACHT ARISTEGUIETA WITH REGARD TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE MINISTRY AND ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO THE ROLE OF THE VENEZUELAN DELEGATION IN THE FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE RECENTLY HELD IN QUITO. UNQUOTE.

4. COMMENT: IF IN FACT SCHACHT IS ENGAGED IN A STRUGGLE TO SAVE HIS OFFICIAL NECK, IT MAY BE THAT HE IS EITHER

(A) NOT IN A POSITION TO APPROACH THE PRESIDENT WITH REGARD TO THE SUGGESTIONS HE MADE TO UNDER SECRETARY INGERSOLL, AS REPORTED QUITO 7721; OR

(B) HE MAY SO HAVE LOST THE CONFIDENCE OF HIS PRESIDENT THAT HE MIGHT NOT BE EMPOWERED TO UNDERTAKE THE CONVERSATIONS OPENING DURING THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 16, AS SUGGESTED REF B. IN CONSEQUENCE, I HAVE DECIDED NOT TO PRESS HIM FURTHER THIS WEEK BUT SHALL ENDEAVOR AT AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO ASCERTAIN WHERE WE STAND.

5. MEANWHILE, FORMER AMBASSADOR BERNBAUM, WHO IS IN TOWN AND WHO ATTENDED MY LUNCHEON FOR AD LEADERS NOV 19, INFORMS ME THAT HE HAD LAST NIGHT RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM SCHACHT INDICATING THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ DESIRED BERNBAUM TO BREAKFAST WITH HIM TOMORROW MORNING. BERNBAUM PROMISES TO GIVE ME A REPORT OF THAT MEETING, WHICH MAY SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE CONJECTURES SET FORTH ABOVE.
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